

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
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From Your Commissioner...

As Always, Fairs Pray for No Rain

The New Hampshire agricultural fair season begins this week with North Haverhill and Stratham leading off, and with nine more to follow scattered over the time to Columbus Day weekend.

For the hundreds of volunteers who make these fine events function it will be the same old story: praying for good weather. No matter how good the exhibits, the food, the music, the rides, keeping the rain away determines the success of a fair.

And just like farm folks everywhere at planting time, fair people approach the coming season with high hopes and plenty of enthusiasm.

North Haverhill Fair president Dave Keith says insurance coverage is always a major concern these days, and this year his board of directors has switched carriers in hopes of getting better coverage and service.

"It's always a big hassle. It's wicked when you've got cattle, tractors around people, just getting adequate coverage," he says.

But Keith is excited about a major addition to the list of attractions on his fairground, a maple museum. It's stocked with a fine collection of sugar making artifacts and memorabilia donated by Dr. Ed Blaisdell, local veterinarian and renowned collector of all kinds of things agricultural.

"You name it, this maple collection has got it," Keith says, "buckets, arches, antique tubing, on and on."

If growing conditions hold up this should turn out to be an excellent year for silage corn. Up and down the Connecticut and Merrimack Valleys and points between and beyond stands exhibit outstanding uniformity and stalk and leaf development.

Timely rains and a few stretches of heat have provided the moisture and degree days to move the crop along.

Speaking of degree days, a group of scientists—including two from UNH—recently presented predictions on effects of a warming climate on New Hampshire and other northeastern states. As pollution alters the atmosphere they foresee our state's climate potentially resembling that of North Carolina by the end of this century.

That would mean an eight to 10 degree rise in average temperatures, frequent short-term droughts and as many as 65 days each summer with readings over 90. More dirty air will doom many of our hardwoods and the spruce-fir forest, ruin the maple and ski industries, bring on more pests and disrupt the normal pattern of New Hampshire seasons. But it

will also provide the heat to facilitate far greater corn yields and allow more production of other cold-sensitive crops like peaches.

A group called the New Hampshire Carbon Coalition is working to publicize these predictions and advocate for policies to reduce effects of climate change. Read more at climatechoices.org.

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The recent legislative session allocated \$12 million in funding to revive the state's Land and Community Heritage Program (LCHIP), which has a huge backlog of applications for money to protect important farm and forest land and preserve historic structures.

Availability of some state money will greatly help with matching funds needed for programs such as the federal Farm and Ranchland Protection Program (FRPP), which has been the primary source of funds for agricultural land easement purchases in recent years.

The LCHIP is losing its founding executive director, Rachel Rouillard, who is off to pursue a graduate degree. Amanda Merrill, a veteran State House environmental policy person, will run the program while the search is on for Rouillard's successor.

Steve Taylor, Commissioner